Google Glass lets us track and be tracked

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District News

Alexander Hayes with some outdated technology

By Angie Angel

Tracking of personal data is becoming more and more colossal, and raises questions about who will have access to it, why and when.

Bungendore resident Alexander Hayes is involved in a new technology that will hit the domestic market in March next year. Alexander is off to Canada on 27-29 June to involve himself in multi disciplined discussions with academics, privacy commissioners, legal experts, military people, engineers, suppliers and others. The IEEE event (http://www.istas13.org) focuses on the possibilities and implications of wearable computer technology, in this case, the eye and audio gear that one wears like spectacles, called Google Glass. It is one of several wearable computer technologies presently being developed. Others that exist take the form of pendants or brooches, and all are in the early phases of development.

Alexander described the concept of Google Glass: "It has a transparent screen in front of your eye that can turn into a display so you can view and access data. It can record images, video, audio and stores it on the Google servers (the Cloud). Like mobile phones, it can provide you with geolocation directions and a phone service. Don't forget all mobile phones now beam your geographical location every few seconds to mobile service providers. Glass just goes one step further moving us to an augmented reality, where we can you can recall memories and events, eg old conversations, at will.

"The capabilities of this digital glass device are endless with early adopters creating apps that let you wink as a cue to get it to take a photo, to connect to services and recall a scene or conversation all with a simple audio cue. It also has capacity to be a pedometer for athletes, or record additional information about your health. It may also get to » C3

C4 » circle of friends.

"It's all very well now to revel in the trivia of our lives, but what if the political context changes?" I asked him.

Alexander is every bit as invested in understanding the implications of the new technology. "Some people want to engage in 'life logging', but whether you do or whether you don't, it is going to be a massive new paradigm in the way we do things as humans, in the way we live our lives. Different groups, such as covert surveillance people, trades, doctors, others will use it in all sorts of ways."

Clearly these new technologies are not going to go away and will have immense social implications. Google Glass has its positive allure and benefit and it will no doubt be able to provide health sensoring, safety possibilities, and legal evidence, but whether it will become a popular recreational 'life logging' option to share with friends is a future mystery. I would not have believed ten years ago that Facebook would have amassed such an astronomical following but it did. It will be interesting to see if this does too.

C2 » a point where you could access data from your remote computer if you are somewhere where it is suddenly required. Most certainly it will be user specific, recognising the user by eye identification, so that you can't pass it off to someone else to be your alibi."

Presumably it may be used to get directions to navigate to a particular person if you give it their name or ID, assuming they are wearing the same device.

Alexander is presently a PhD candidate at the University of Wollongong in the Faculty of Informatics, School of Information Systems and Technology, concentrating on wearable technology. I mentioned at the outset of the interview, after reading reviews that Google Glass might be the next generation for social networking, that some people (they are usually the exception, not the rule) think Facebook is a private spy network, and don't want a record of their doings and connections on the Facebook servers. "Yes" Alexander agreed. After all, Facebook's sole reason for being is to nag and insistently remind the user to list, identify and expand their » C5